

AP ENGLISH LITERATURE – Multiple Choice Testing

I. INTRODUCTION

- 1 Hr. test
- 55 questions (about one minute per question, including reading time)
- Divide time per passage – be ruthless! About 15 minutes per passage.
- Four passages about 12-16 questions per passage
- Essential to practice at home
- Essential to analyze any wrong answers – spot trends and personal weaknesses, then fix them! Understand why a wrong answer is wrong, especially in practice.
- ~~Lose 1/4 point on wrong answers~~
- Multiple choice = 45% Essays = 55%
- Typical: 2 prose/ 2 poems
- Test only uses literature from 1575—present (no Middle English or Old English)
- One passage will include a minority writer
- Expect 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th century passage

II. STRATEGIES

1. Start with the first passage (not a magazine!); answer ALL questions within a passage at one time
2. Skim the questions before reading the passage (works for most). DON'T read the answers yet! Have 3-4 specific ideas to search for, ignoring the “generic” questions. Turn it into a scavenger hunt.
3. Read the passage ONCE. Avoid rereading at this time; get the content by reading
 - a. Actively
 - b. Visualize (2 meanings)
 - c. Paraphrase (each paragraph and whole passage)
 - d. Analyze for theme, style, speaker, structure, tone, figurative language
4. Read the questions carefully. Many wrong answers stem from misreading the question; know what is being asked.
5. Read ALL answer choices, eliminate wrong ones as you go. Remember directions call for the BEST answer choice.

III. TYPES OF QUESTIONS

1. Situation

- who? to whom? (poetry)
- subject of 3rd Paragraph (prose)

2. Structure

- poetry: how stanzas relate
- what word in _____ relates back to _____
- what divisions represent its structure
- prose: how one paragraph relates to another
- progression of thought and overall structure

3. Theme

- whole and parts

4. Grammar and Word Meaning

- poetry: specific word choice definitions within context
- pronoun references/antecedents
- paraphrase word choice
- prose: subject of long sentence is...

5. Diction

- poetry: Use of _____ indicates
- poet's idea of _____ is suggested by _____
- prose: choice of verbs in paragraph 4 suggests _____
- speaker's anger is implied by _____

6. Images/ Figurative language/ Literary Technique

- which one? Where else in work?
- Purpose of a metaphor
- analogy in 2nd paragraph

7. Tone (perhaps metrics in poetry)

8. Rhetoric (mostly in prose)

- function of last sentence
- effect of shift in point of view

IV. DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF QUESTIONS

1. FACTUAL

- phrase presents example of...
- all are Figurative language except
- Man in line ____ is pictured mainly in his role as ____
- in line ____ the ____ is seen chiefly as ...
- in line ____ the speaker regards himself as ...
- beginning in ____ speaker does which ...
- excerpt is written in ...
- according to the speaker, ...
- “they” in line ____ refers to ...
- the object of “to” in line ____ is ...

2. MAIN IDEA

- _____ hated _____ because _____
- parable of _____ serves to _____
- _____ believed human nature is _____
- which best describes _____ at the end
- tone
- which describes how _____ felt about ...
- passage is concerned with ...
- relation between line ____ and line ____ is best described as ...
- main point about ____ is ...
- line ____ speaker attempts to ...
- style is characterized by ...
- irony rests chiefly on _____

3. HIDDEN IDEA

- ____ interpreted to mean
- phrase evokes _____
- image of _____ refers to ...
- _____ most likely represents _____
- can be inferred
- in line ____ the phrase “ ____ ” means _____
- line ____ suggests that ...
- can be inferred speaker would agree with ...

V. REASONS ANSWERS ARE WRONG

1. Irrelevant to the question
2. Contradictory to the passage
3. Unreasonable (the “Huh?” choice)
4. Too general or too specific
5. Never addressed in the passage
6. Look for the SPECIFIC WORDS that make the answer wrong

Remember the difference between a right answer and the BEST (credited) answer. More than one can be right; look for the best. Avoid distractions!